



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

SPEECH-LANGUAGE SEVERITY RATING SCALES

Severity rating scales are valuable tools for describing the child's speech-language impairment, communicating with eligibility and IEP team members, and assuring consistency among speech-language pathologists in the division. The presence of a severity rating on any of the four scales does not guarantee eligibility; rather, it describes the results of the speech-language assessment in consistent terms. The eligibility committee will consider the severity rating, in conjunction with other information, as it determines eligibility. Eligibility is based on (1) the presence of a speech-language impairment, (2) that has an adverse educational impact, and (3) that results in the need for special education (specialized instruction) and related services (services required for the student to benefit from special education). See the eligibility section of these guidelines for further information on eligibility.

Further, a particular severity rating does not specify or predict a certain level of service. The level of service is determined by the goals, objectives/benchmarks specified by the IEP team. See the IEP section of this manual for further information on IEP development and decision-making.

After indicating the severity rating in the columns, compare the rating score to the functional narrative. If the rating and overview do not match, consider the data used and select the functional narrative that best describes the student.

When completing ratings in multiple areas, complete all pages. Individual ratings are reviewed and functional narratives are selected to describe performance for each area. Service recommendations are based on the area with the most severe rating. Do not add or average separate rating scales to determine severity.

SEVERITY RATING SUMMARY SHEET

Name _____ DOB _____

Date Completed _____ Speech-Language Pathologist _____

Record points assigned for each factor considered in each area.

AREAS	FACTORS CONSIDERED				TOTAL POINTS	OVERALL FUNCTIONAL LEVEL
	A	B	C	D		
Articulation						
Language						
Voice						
Fluency						

Do not add or average separate rating scales to determine severity.
See individual severity rating scales for full description of factors considered and overall functional levels.

Overall Functional Level		
Level 0	0-3 points	No apparent problem
Level 1	4-6 points	Mild
Level 2	7-9 points	Moderate
Level 3	10-12 points	Severe

The presence of a severity rating on any of the four scales does not guarantee eligibility; rather, it describes the results of the speech-language assessment in consistent terms. The eligibility committee may consider the severity rating, in conjunction with other information, as it determines eligibility.

Eligibility is based on (1) the presence of a speech-language impairment,
(2) that has an adverse educational impact, and
(3) that results in the need for special education (specialized instruction) and related services (services to benefit from special education).

A particular severity rating does not specify or predict a certain level of service.

LANGUAGE SEVERITY RATING SCALE

A language impairment is defined as the inadequate or inappropriate acquisition, comprehension or expression of language. Students who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or those students who are not speakers of Standard American English due to sociocultural dialects are not automatically considered to be students with a speech-language impairment. The presence of a language impairment does not guarantee the child's eligibility for special education.

Evaluation Data¹

The following measures are appropriate for use in determining the presence of a language impairment:

1. language sample
2. contextual probes
3. structured observation
4. classroom work samples (e.g., look at syntax, morphology, organization, vocabulary and spelling in narratives)
5. other curriculum academic results (e.g., analysis of SOL assessment results by test item)
6. standardized tests
7. teacher report, interview, or checklist
8. child report, interview, or checklist
9. parent report, interview, or checklist

NOTE: Teacher, child, and parent reports, interviews, or checklists are not sufficient evidence by themselves and must be supported with additional data.

Best Practice: Assess with at least one standardized test and two nonstandardized measures of functional language. If a standardized test reveals a deficit, a second measure should be administered to confirm the findings. Language samples and pragmatic assessments must be included as part of the initial assessment.

Spoken Language Comprehension and Production²

The severity scale uses the following terms to describe spoken language comprehension and production:

Low comprehension demand: Listening situations that primarily require the student to understand language content and forms acquired at a younger age than the student's current

¹ Adapted from Connecticut State Department of Education. (1999). Guidelines for Speech and Language Programs. Vol. II: Determining Eligibility for Special Education Speech and Language Services.

² Adapted from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2004) K-6 Schools: National Outcomes Measurement System. Rockville, MD: Author.

chronological age.

High comprehension demand: Listening situations that primarily require the student to understand language content and forms representing more recently acquired structures for the student's chronological age.

Low verbal demand: Verbal initiations and responses that primarily require language content and forms acquired at a younger age than the student's current chronological age.

High verbal demand: Verbal initiations and responses that primarily require language content and forms representing more recently acquired structures for the student's chronological age.

Overall Functional Level

The speech-language pathologist should complete the attached rating scale first, adding the points assigned to each factor. Then the total points should be applied to the Language Severity Rating Scale Overall Functional Level for an overall severity rating.

NOTE: When completing the scale, the rating should be based on the child's performance in his/her preferred mode of communication (e.g., American Sign Language, augmentative/alternative communication). This should be documented in the evaluation report, eligibility minutes, and IEP. On occasion, it may be valuable to complete the rating without the preferred mode of communication to contrast the difference in the child's skills between the preferred mode of communication and standard oral communication.

LANGUAGE SEVERITY RATING SCALE

OVERALL FUNCTIONAL LEVEL

Level 0 (0 – 3 points) No apparent problem	The student's independent language skills are consistently age-appropriate. The student is able to use compensatory strategies when needed.
Level 1 (4 – 6 points) Mild	The student's independent language skills are age appropriate. He/she is successful in participating in most low comprehension and low verbal demand educational activities with minimum support. However, the student's participation in high comprehension and high verbal demand situations may occasionally be limited.
Level 2 (7 – 9 points) Moderate	The student's independent language skills are often age appropriate in low comprehension and low verbal demand educational activities. The student's successful participation is frequently limited in high demand activities unless maximum support is provided to reduce the comprehension and verbal demands.
Level 3 (10 – 12 points) Severe	The student's independent language comprehension and verbal messages are rarely age-appropriate even in low comprehension and low verbal demand educational activities. His/her participation in high comprehension and high demand educational activities is not age appropriate and tends to be extremely limited even with supports.

LANGUAGE SEVERITY RATING SCALE

Factors		No Apparent Problem (0 pts)	Mild (1 pt)	Moderate (2 pts)	Severe (3 pts)	Points Assigned
A	Description of language in low comprehension and low verbal demand situations	No deficits in receptive, expressive, or pragmatic language	Mild deficit in receptive, expressive, or pragmatic language	Moderate deficit in receptive, expressive, or pragmatic language	Severe deficit in receptive, expressive, or pragmatic language	
B	Description of language in high comprehension and high verbal demand situations	No deficits in receptive, expressive, or pragmatic language	Mild deficit in receptive, expressive, or pragmatic language	Moderate deficit in receptive, expressive, or pragmatic language	Severe deficit in receptive, expressive, or pragmatic language	
C	Standardized Assessment measures (1 or more; standard score assumes mean of 100)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 standard deviation below mean Standard score at or above 85 17th %ile or above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 – 1.5 standard deviations below mean Standard score between 78 and 84 7th - 16th %ile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.5 – 2 standard deviations below mean Standard score between 70 and 75 3rd - 7th %ile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 standard deviations below mean Standard score of 69 or below below 3rd %ile 	
D	Non-standardized assessment (functional analysis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May indicate differences from Standard American English Minimal or no impact on pragmatics, semantics, or syntax-morphological skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May indicate mild deficits in language behavior Minimal impact on pragmatics, semantics, or syntax-morphological skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May indicate moderate deficits in language behavior Moderate impact on pragmatics, semantics, or syntax-morphological skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May indicate severe deficits in language behavior Severe impact on pragmatics, semantics, or syntax-morphological skills 	
					TOTAL POINTS	